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HOME PROJECTS



Billions, and growing, for lawmakers' projects in big bill

A boat heads out from the Flamingo boat ramp May 4, 2020, in Everglades National Park in Florida.

Associated Press
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Billions, and growing, for lawmakers' projects in big bill

From Front

By **ALAN FRAM and AARON M. KESSLER**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Home-district projects for members of Congress are back, sprinkled across the government-wide \$1.5 trillion bill President Joe Biden signed recently. The official tally shows amounts modest by past standards yet spread widely around the country — and that understate what lawmakers are claiming credit for. The bipartisan legislation, financing federal agencies this year, contains 4,975 such projects worth \$9.7 billion, according to an Associated Press examination of items attributed to specific lawmakers in legislative documents. The listed projects, long called earmarks, ranged from \$4,000 for evidence detection equipment for Huntington, West Virginia, to \$350 million to help restore Florida's vast but imperiled Everglades. The projects' reemergence after an 11-year hiatus, with transparency requirements and other curbs, marks a revival of expenditures that let lawmakers tout achievements to voters and help party leaders build support for legislation. They're vilified by some, especially conservatives, as emblems of influence



The Autherine Lucy Clock Tower at the Malone Hood Plaza stands in front of Foster Auditorium on the University of Alabama campus in Tuscaloosa, Ala., June 16, 2019.

Associated Press

peddling and waste. But they've been openly embraced by lawmakers from both parties, who cite Congress' constitutional power of the purse and say they know their local needs. "I'm very proud of them," said Sen. Richard Shelby, top Republican on the Senate Appropriations Committee, of the eye-popping \$648 million he amassed for his state, the AP analysis showed. That included \$126 million for two campuses of the University of

Alabama, his alma mater, and hundreds of millions to improve the city of Mobile's seaport and airport. The price tag of Shelby's projects was the highest in Congress, according to Taxpayers for Common Sense, a nonpartisan group that favors fiscal restraint and produced largely similar figures in its own preliminary study. Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., was next at \$361 million. Shelby, who's retiring, took credit in press releases for

winning "billions" for Alabama, well beyond the amount in the public lists. Just one example he cited is \$1.3 billion for flight training at Fort Rucker, an Army base in the state. Many lawmakers are asserting that the money they won for constituents exceeded what the measure explicitly attributes to them. That's because Congress narrowly defines what's listed as home-district projects. Bolstering broad, national

programs that lawmakers know benefit their states isn't included, so lawmakers can tout such amounts as achievements without having them formally listed as earmarks.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., had 203 projects for New York, which the Taxpayers group found was far more than anyone else in Congress. They totaled \$314 million and ranged from \$27 million to upgrade Fort Drum's water systems to \$44,000 for neighborhood improvements in the city of Geneva.

But in press releases, Schumer and other New Yorkers took credit for other funding not on the lists. For example, he and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., pointed to \$293 million they said they'd secured for the Air Force Research Laboratory in Rome, N.Y., following "their fierce advocacy."

The House limited lawmakers to a maximum of 10 projects apiece. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., was among over 140 lawmakers not listed as receiving projects. Yet a press release cited more than three dozen items in the bill that would benefit his state, including \$321 million for an environmental cleanup at an old uranium enrichment plant in Paducah. □



The U.S. Supreme Court is seen, Friday, March 18, 2022 in Washington.

Associated Press

By **JESSICA GRESKO**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a victory for people falsely accused by police of crimes, the Supreme Court

removed a barrier Monday to lawsuits against law enforcement for malicious prosecution. The 6-3 ruling means that some malicious prosecu-

High court opens door wider to malicious prosecution claims

tion lawsuits that had previously been thrown out at an early stage will instead be allowed to move forward. The ruling was joined by both liberal and conservative justices. Justice Brett Kavanaugh wrote for the majority of the court that a person seeking to sue for malicious prosecution under a federal civil rights law has to prove that the case brought against him "ended without a conviction." The justices rejected a higher bar that federal appeals courts in much of the coun-

try had adopted that said the person had to show their case ended because they were innocent. Justice Samuel Alito wrote in a dissent that his colleagues' decision "has no basis in the Constitution and is almost certain to lead to confusion." He was joined by two other conservative justices, Justice Clarence Thomas and Justice Neil Gorsuch. The case before the justices involved the 2014 arrest of Brooklyn resident Larry Thompson who sued for malicious prosecution after charges against him

resulting from a scuffle with police were dropped. Thompson's lawyer Amir Ali of the MacArthur Justice Center said in an interview he was "very pleased with the court's decision" and that it was "welcome and needed." Ali said that prior to the court's decision there was a "completely unjust and really senseless barrier to bringing these lawsuits" and that the court had "removed that unjust barrier." Ali said his client will now "have his day in court" and get the opportunity to prove his malicious prosecution claim. □

Biden: Putin should face war crimes trial for Bucha killings

By A. MADHANI, Z. MILLER
and C. MEGERIAN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Monday called for a war crimes trial against Russia President Vladimir Putin and said he'd seek more sanctions after reported atrocities in Ukraine.

"You saw what happened in Bucha," Biden said. He added that Putin "is a war criminal."

Biden's comments to reporters came after Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited Bucha, one of the towns surrounding Kyiv where Ukrainian officials say the bodies of civilians have been found. Zelenskyy called the Russian actions "genocide" and called for the West to apply tougher sanctions against Russia. "We do not believe that this is just a random accident, or the rogue act of a particular individual," said U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan of the images of bound civilians killed. He noted the U.S. had warned that Russia would seek to imprison or kill dissidents or others it viewed as threats to its attempted occupation of Ukraine. "We believe that this was part of the plan," he added.

Biden and U.S. officials, however, stopped short of



President Joe Biden speaks to the media at Fort Lesley J. McNair, Monday, April 4, 2022, as he returns to Washington and the White House after spending the weekend in Wilmington, Del.

Associated Press

calling the actions genocide. "We have seen atrocities, we have seen war crimes, we have not yet seen a level of systematic deprivation of life of the Ukrainian people to rise to the level of genocide," Sullivan said.

The bodies of 410 civilians have been removed from Kyiv-area towns that were recently retaken from Russian forces, Ukraine's prosecutor-general, Iryna Venediktova, said. Associated Press journalists saw the bodies of at least 21 people in various spots around

Bucha, northwest of the capital. "We have to continue to provide Ukraine with the weapons they need to continue the fight. And we have to gather all the detail so this can be an actual -- have a war crimes trial," Biden said.

Biden lashed out at Putin as "brutal." "What's happening in Bucha is outrageous and everyone sees it," Biden added.

Sullivan said Monday that Russia was shifting its focus in its war in Ukraine to the country's east and south, after experiencing

a stronger-than-expected defense by Ukrainians supported by Western allies.

Sullivan said "the Russians have now realized that the West will not break" in its support of the Ukrainian government. But he warned that Russia was redoubling its offensive in other parts of the country after pulling many troops from around the capital of Kyiv. White House officials said talks about ramping up new sanctions against Russia intensified after reports of alleged atrocities emerged. Biden said Mon-

day that he would continue to add sanctions but did not detail what sectors the U.S. may target next. Sullivan said the additional sanctions would come this week.

After unveiling an avalanche of sanctions in the first weeks of the war, administration officials in recent days have put more focus on closing loopholes that Russia might try to use to avoid sanctions.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen tweeted Monday that the European Union will send investigators to Ukraine to help the local prosecutor general "document war crimes."

A Russian law enforcement agency says it has launched its own investigation into allegations that Ukrainian civilians were massacred in suburbs of Kyiv that were held by Russian troops, focusing on what it calls "false information" about Russian forces. The Investigative Committee claims Ukrainian authorities made the allegations "with the aim of discrediting Russian troops" and that those involved should be investigated over possible breaches of a new Russian law banning what the government deems to be false information about its forces. □

Medicare enrollees to get free COVID-19 tests at drug stores

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Amid worries that the latest coronavirus variant could spark another rise in cases, Medicare announced Monday that millions of enrollees will finally have access to free over-the-counter COVID-19 tests at drug stores. More than 59 million people with Medicare's "Part B" outpatient coverage will be able to get up to eight free at-home tests per month, or enough for an individual to test twice a week, as some doctors have recommended.

Medicare has lagged private insurance in following the Biden administration's directive to cover at-home tests because rules and regulations stood in the way, and officials had to find a work-around. This is the first time the health insurance program for older people and those with disabilities has covered an over-the-counter test at no cost to recipients.

Medicare's move could turn out to be prescient. The BA.2 omicron variant now accounts for more than half of U.S. cases, having rapidly overtaken the original strain. That initial

omicron wave this winter caused the biggest spike yet in virus cases, straining many hospitals to the limit. Since then, cases nationally have rapidly dropped to the lowest level since before last summer's delta surge. Coronavirus restrictions have been largely lifted. But some areas where BA.2 took hold early are seeing increasing cases.

Monday's announcement followed another precautionary move last week, when government health officials authorized a second round of booster shots for people 50 and older as well as those with weak-



A home COVID-19 test kit is held, Feb. 3, 2022, in Seattle.

Associated Press

ened immune systems. National pharmacy chains participating in Medicare's give-away include: Albertsons Companies, Inc., Costco Pharmacy, CVS, Food Lion, Giant Food, The Gi-

ant Company, Hannaford Pharmacies, H-E-B Pharmacy, Hy-Vee Pharmacy, Kroger Family of Pharmacies, Rite Aid Corp., Shop & Stop, Walgreens and Walmart. □

Library study finds ‘challenged’ books soared in 2021

By **HILLEL ITALIE**
AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Deborah Caldwell-Stone, director of the American Library Association’s Office for Intellectual Freedom, has never been so busy.

“A year ago, we might have been receiving one, maybe two reports a day about a book being challenged at a library. And usually those calls would be for guidance on how to handle a challenge or for materials that support the value of the work being challenged,” Caldwell-Stone told The Associated Press.

“Now, we’re getting three, four, five reports a day, many in need of support and some in need of a great deal of support.”

“We’re on the phone constantly,” she added.

Accounts of book bannings and attempted book bannings, along with threats against librarians, have soared over the past year and the ALA has included some numbers in its annual State of America’s Libraries Report, released Monday. The association found 729 challenges — affecting nearly 1,600 books — at public schools and libraries in 2021, more than double 2020’s figures and the highest since the ALA began compiling challenges more than 20 years ago.



Amanda Darrow, director of youth, family and education programs at the Utah Pride Center, poses with books on Dec. 16, 2021, that have been the subject of complaints from parents in Salt Lake City.

The actual total for last year is likely much higher — the ALA collects data through media accounts and through cases it learns about from librarians and educators and other community members.

Books preemptively pulled by librarians — out of fear of community protest or concern for their jobs — and challenges never reported by libraries are not included.

The number could well grow again in 2022, Caldwell-Stone said, as conservative-led school boards and

legislatures enact more restrictions. Last week, the Georgia legislature passed a bill that would accelerate the process for removing books seen as “harmful to minors.”

“Nothing would surprise me,” Caldwell-Stone says. The two most challenged books on the ALA’s top 10 list have been in the news often: Maia Kobabe’s graphic memoir about sexual identity, “Gender Queer,” and Jonathan Evison’s “Lawn Boy,” a coming-of-age novel narrated by a young gay man.

Both have been singled out by Republican officials.

Last fall in Virginia, Glenn Youngkin backed a local school board’s banning of the two books during his successful run for governor. Around the same time, South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster supported a school board’s decision to remove “Gender Queer.” In Florida recently, Gov. Ron DeSantis criticized “Gender Queer” and “Lawn Boy” upon signing a law that would force elementary schools to provide a searchable list of every

book available in their libraries or used in instruction and allow parents, DeSantis said, “to blow the whistle.” Kobabe and Evison noted during recent interviews an irony of their books being targeted: Neither set out to write a story for young people.

But they gained a following among students with the help of the American Library Association, which has given each book an Alex Award for works “written for adults that have special appeal to young adults, ages 12 through 18.”

“I think a big part of our books getting so much attention is that they’re award winners and ended up being purchased by libraries all over the country,” Kobabe said.

Others on the ALA list, virtually all cited for LGBTQ or racial themes, include Angie Thomas’ bestselling “The Hate U Give,” centered on a police shooting of a Black teen; George Johnson’s “All Boys Aren’t Blue,” Juno Dawson’s “This Book Is Gay” and Susan Kuklin’s “Beyond Magenta.” Two older works that have been on the list before also appear: Sherman Alexie’s autobiographical novel “The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian” and Nobel laureate Toni Morrison’s debut novel “The Bluest Eye.” □

Associated Press



Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooter Nikolas Cruz enters the courtroom before jury pre-selection in the penalty phase of his trial at the Broward County Courthouse in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. on Monday, April 4, 2022.

Associated Press

By **TERRY SPENCER**
Associated Press
FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Jury selection in the deadliest U.S. mass shooting ever to go to trial

began Monday with preliminary screening for the panel that will determine whether Nikolas Cruz will be put to death for murdering 17 students and

Parkland, Florida, school shooter’s jury selection begins

staff members at a Parkland, Florida, high school. Eighteen members of the first panel of 60 prospective jurors survived the only question they were asked by Circuit Judge Elizabeth Scherer: Could they serve in a trial that is expected to last from June to September? The 18 will be brought back in several weeks for questioning about whether they could judge Cruz fairly and their views on the death penalty. Two more groups are expected to be screened Monday. Court officials have said 1,500 candidates or

more could be brought before Scherer, prosecutors and Cruz’s attorneys for preliminary screening. The expected two-month process will pick 12 panelists plus eight alternates. Cruz, 23, pleaded guilty in October to the Feb. 14, 2018, massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, meaning the jury will only decide if he receives a death sentence or life without parole. Cruz sat between his attorneys, wearing a gray sweater and an anti-viral face mask, four sheriff’s deputies sitting nearby. He

spoke only briefly, waiving his right to participate directly in the screening process.

Eight parents and other family members of some victims sat together in the courtroom.

When prospective jurors are brought back in a few weeks, they will be asked whether they can judge the case fairly. They also will be asked if they can vote for the death penalty if the evidence supports that verdict, but don’t believe it should be mandatory for murder. Those who can’t will be dismissed. □

Russia faces global outrage over bodies in Ukraine's streets

By O. STASHEVSKYI and
N. QENA

Associated Press

BUCHA, Ukraine (AP) —

Moscow faced global revulsion and accusations of war crimes Monday after the Russian pullout from the outskirts of Kyiv revealed streets strewn with corpses of what appeared to be civilians, some of whom had seemingly been killed at close range.

The grisly images of battered bodies left out in the open or hastily buried led to calls for tougher sanctions against the Kremlin, namely a cutoff of fuel imports from Russia. Germany reacted by expelling 40 Russian diplomats, and Lithuania threw out its Russian ambassador.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy left the capital, Kyiv, for his first reported trip since the war began nearly six weeks ago to see for himself what he called the "genocide" and "war crimes" in the town of Bucha, the site of some of the horrors.

"Dead people have been found in barrels, basements, strangled, tortured," said Zelenskyy, who again called on Russia to move quickly to negotiate an end to the war.

In Bucha, northwest of Kyiv, bodies wrapped in black plastic were piled on one end of a mass grave in a churchyard. Many of the victims had been shot in cars or killed in explosions trying to flee the city, and with the morgue full and the cemetery impossible to reach, it was the only place to keep the dead, Father Andrii Galavin said.

Tanya Nedashkivs'ka said she buried her husband in a garden outside their apartment building after he was detained by Russian troops and was found dead with two others in a stairwell.

"Please, I am begging you, do something!" she said. "It's me talking, a Ukrainian woman, a Ukrainian woman, a mother of two kids and one grandchild. For all the wives and mothers, make peace on Earth so no one ever grieves again."

Other European leaders

and the United Nations human rights chief condemned the bloodshed, and U.S. President Joe

yet to emerge. By all accounts, the horrors in the shattered southern port city of Mariupol are likely to be

on a key route to the Donbas, the official said.

Dmytro Zhyvystskyy, governor of Ukraine's northern

of sanctions and in particular on coal and gasoline. We need to act," he said on France-Inter radio.

But Poland's prime minister described Russia under Putin as a "totalitarian-fascist state" and called for actions "that will finally break Putin's war machine."

"Would you negotiate with Hitler, with Stalin, with Pol Pot?" Mateusz Morawiecki asked of Macron.

In announcing Germany's expulsion of Russian diplomats, Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said the images from Bucha reveal the "unbelievable brutality of the Russian leadership and those who follow its propaganda."

"We must fear similar images from many other places occupied by Russian troops in Ukraine," she added.

The U.S. and its allies have sought to punish Russia for the invasion by imposing sweeping sanctions but fear further harm to the global economy, which is still recovering from the pandemic. Europe is in a particular bind, since it gets 40% of its gas and 25% of its oil from Russia.

Putin's Feb. 24 invasion has left thousands of people dead and forced more than 4 million Ukrainians to flee their country.

"The horrors that we've seen in Bucha are just the tip of the iceberg of all the crimes that have been committed by the Russian army on the territory of Ukraine so far," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said.

"And I can tell you without exaggeration but with great sorrow that the situation in Mariupol is much worse compared to what we've seen in Bucha and other cities, towns, and villages nearby Kyiv." □



Journalists stand by a mass grave in Bucha, on the outskirts of Kyiv, Ukraine, Monday, April 4, 2022. Associated Press

Biden said Russian President Vladimir Putin should face a war crimes trial.

"This guy is brutal, and what's happening in Bucha is outrageous," said Biden, who also promised to increase sanctions against Moscow.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov dismissed the scenes outside Kyiv as a "stage-managed anti-Russian provocation." Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said the images contained "signs of video forgery and various fakes."

Russia similarly rejected previous allegations of atrocities as fabrications on Ukraine's part.

Ukrainian officials said the bodies of 410 civilians were found in towns around Kyiv that were recaptured from Russian forces in recent days.

In Bucha, Associated Press journalists saw 21 bodies, including a group of nine in civilian clothes who appeared to have been shot at close range. At least two had their hands tied behind their backs. A bag of groceries was spilled by one of the dead.

The full extent of the bloodshed in the Kyiv area has

far worse. "This is a war of murders, a lot of blood. A lot of civilians are dying," said Natalia Svitlova, a refugee from Dnipro in eastern Ukraine who fled to Poland. "I don't understand why this is possible in the 21st century and why no one can stop it."

Russia withdrew many of its forces from the capital area in recent days after being thwarted in its bid to swiftly capture Kyiv. It has instead poured troops and mercenaries into the country's east in a stepped-up bid to gain control of the Donbas, the largely Russian-speaking industrial region that includes Mariupol, which has seen some of the heaviest fighting and worst suffering of the war.

About two-thirds of the Russian troops around Kyiv have now left and are either in Belarus or on their way there, probably getting more supplies and reinforcements, said a senior U.S. defense official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss an intelligence assessment.

Russian forces also appear to be repositioning artillery and troops to try to take the city of Izyum, which lies

Sumy Region, said Russian troops who took over the area on the way toward Kyiv had also retreated back to Russia, with Ukrainian forces capturing small groups left behind.

European allies, though united in outrage over the aftermath outside Kyiv, appeared split on how to respond. Poland, which is on Ukraine's border and has taken in large numbers of refugees, angrily singled out France and Germany for not taking tougher action and urged Europe to quickly wean itself off Russian energy. But Germany said it would stick with a more gradual approach of phasing out coal and oil imports over the next several months.

Western and Ukrainian leaders have accused Russia of war crimes before, and the International Criminal Court's prosecutor has already opened an investigation. But the latest reports ratcheted up the condemnation.

French President Emmanuel Macron said there is "clear evidence of war crimes" in Bucha that demand new punitive measures.

"I'm in favor of a new round



Hong Kong leader Lam won't seek new term after rocky 5 years

By ZEN SOO and VINCENT YU

Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said Monday she wouldn't seek a second term after a rocky five years marked by huge protests calling for her resignation, a security crackdown that has quashed dissent and most recently a COVID-19 wave that overwhelmed the health system.

Her successor will be picked in May, with the city's hard-line security chief during the 2019 protests seen as a likely choice.

"I will complete my five-year term as chief executive on the 30th of June this year, and I will also call an end to my 42 years of public service," Lam said at a news conference. The 64-year-old career civil servant said she plans to spend more time with her family, which is her "sole consideration." Speculation had swirled for months about whether she would seek another term, and she repeatedly declined to comment on the possibility. But on Monday, she said her decision had been conveyed to the central government in Beijing last year and was met with "respect and understanding."



Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam pauses during a news conference in Hong Kong, Monday, April 4, 2022.

Her time in office will likely be remembered as a turning point during which Beijing firmly established control over the former British colony, which was returned to China in 1997. For years, the city rocked back and forth between calls for more freedom and growing signs of China extending its reach, chipping away at a promise by the mainland government to give Hong Kong the power to govern itself semi-autonomously for 50 years.

Lam's popularity sharply declined over her five-year term, particularly over legislation that would have allowed criminal suspects to be extradited to mainland China for trial and her leadership during the protests that ensued in 2019. The mass demonstrations were marked at times by violent clashes between police and protesters. Authorities in Hong Kong and Beijing insisted that overseas forces were fueling the movement, rather than local ac-

tivism, while protesters denounced the police crackdown as excessive and said that claims of sedition were attempts to undermine the pro-democracy cause. Lam said she came under great pressure because of the extradition bill, "interference from foreign forces" and the pandemic. "However, the motivation for me to press on was the very staunch support behind me by the central authorities," she said, according to a simultaneous translation by

a government interpreter. Later, Lam strongly backed the national security law initiated by Beijing and implemented by her government that was seen as eroding the "one country, two systems" framework that promised after the handover from Britain that city residents would retain freedoms not found in mainland China, such as a free press and freedom of expression.

The security law and other police and court actions in the years since have virtually erased the city's pro-democracy movement, with activists and the movement's supporters either arrested or jailed. Others have fled into exile. Lam and the central government in Beijing say their actions have restored stability in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong media have reported this week that Chief Secretary John Lee, the city's No. 2 leader, is likely to enter the race to succeed Lam. Lee rose through the ranks as a police officer to become deputy commissioner in 2010, and was the city's secretary of security during the 2019 protests. He is known for his support for the police force during the protests and his tough stance against protesters. □

Associated Press

Families of Beirut port blast victims mark 20 months

BEIRUT (AP) — Carrying portraits of their loved ones, relatives of victims of the August 2020 explosion at the Port of Beirut marched in the Lebanese capital Monday. They marked 20 months since the devastating blast killed more than 200 people and injured thousands.

"We will not forget," read placards held by some of the relatives. They expressed frustration at the judicial investigation that has been suspended for three months amid a deluge of legal challenges by politicians seeking to block the probe.

The blast was caused by

the detonation of hundreds of tons of ammonium nitrate stored in a port warehouse for years, apparently with the knowledge of senior politicians and security officials who did nothing about it. The explosion killed at least 216 people, injured more than 6,500 others and destroyed parts of the city. Twenty months later, nearly everything remains unknown from who ordered the shipment to why officials ignored repeated warnings of the danger. Families of the victims have been pressing for answers, accusing political parties of obstructing the local investigation.

"It is not new because we know that the government is complicit in the crime so it is trying its best to stop (investigating) the crime," said Paul Nagggar, the father of the youngest victim of the blast, 3-year-old Alexandra Nagggar.

But he hopes that parliamentary elections in May will make a difference.

"It is the only solution to remove this regime and to bring justice for my daughters and others," Nagggar said.

The bereaved men and women marched toward the port holding portraits of their lost ones. There, a group of women dressed



Relatives of victims of the August 4, 2020 Beirut port explosion hold portraits of their loved ones who died in the explosion, as they march during a gathering to mark twenty months since the blast that killed more than 200 people and injured thousands, in downtown Beirut, Lebanon, Monday, April 4, 2022. The Arabic placard reads: "Will not forget."

Associated Press

in black sat at the foot of a statue of a Lebanese émigré crying in silence.

The families lit candles at 6:07 p.m., the exact time of

the blast.

Zeina Noun, 53, lost her son to the blast. She said the families will continue to fight. □

Ex-finance minister wins runoff to be Costa Rica's president

By JAVIER CORDOBA

Associated Press

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica (AP)

— A former finance minister who surprised many by making it into Costa Rica's presidential runoff has easily won the election and is to become the Central American country's new leader next month while still fending off accusations of sexual harassment when he worked at the World Bank. With nearly all polling stations reporting late Sunday, conservative economist Rodrigo Chaves had 53% of the vote, compared to 47% for former President José Figueres Ferrer, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal said. More than 42% of eligible voters did not participate, an unusually low turnout for the country, reflecting the lack of enthusiasm Costa Ricans had for the candidates.

In his victory speech, Chaves called for unity to address problems like unemployment and a soaring budget deficit.

"For me this is not a medal nor a trophy, but rather an enormous responsibility, heaped with challenges and difficulties that we will all resolve," he said.

"Costa Rica, the best is to come!" Chaves said before celebrating supporters. His inauguration is scheduled



Costa Rica's former finance minister Rodrigo Chaves speaks to supporters at his headquarters in San Jose, Costa Rica, after winning a presidential runoff election, Sunday, April 3, 2022.

Associated Press

for May 8. Figueres conceded defeat less than an hour after results began to come in. He had led the first round of voting Feb. 6, with Chaves in second that day. Neither had come close to the 40% of the vote needed to avoid a runoff. Figueres congratulated Chaves and wished him the best, adding that continues to believe that Costa Rica is in a "deep crisis" and he is willing to help it recover. Figueres, who was Costa Rica's president from 1994 to 1998, represents the Na-

tional Liberation Party like his father, three-time president José Figueres Ferrer. Chaves served briefly in the administration of outgoing President Carlos Alvarado and represents the Social Democratic Progress Party. Both men waged a bruising campaign.

Chaves' campaign is under investigation by electoral authorities for allegedly running an illegal parallel financing structure. He also has been dogged by a sexual harassment scandal that drove him out of the

World Bank.

While working at the bank, he was accused of sexual harassment by multiple women, was eventually demoted and then resigned. He has denied the accusations.

The World Bank's administrative tribunal last year criticized the way the case was initially handled internally.

The tribunal noted that an internal investigation found that from 2008 to 2013 Chaves leered at, made unwelcome comments

about physical appearance, repeated sexual innuendo and unwelcome sexual advances toward multiple bank employees. Those details were repeated by the bank's human resources department in a letter to Chaves, but it decided to sanction him for misconduct rather than sexual harassment.

"The facts of the present case indicate that (Chaves') conduct was sexual in nature and that he knew or should have known that his conduct was unwelcome," the tribunal wrote. The tribunal also noted that in the proceedings, the bank's current vice president for human resources said in testimony "that the undisputed facts legally amount to sexual harassment."

Political analyst Francisco Barahona said Costa Ricans' lack of enthusiasm, as shown by the low turnout, was the result of the many personal attacks that characterized the campaign. "In the debates they only heated things up in personal confrontations, mistreatment of each other," he said. "They didn't add depth to their proposals to resolve the country's problems. The debates didn't help to motivate the electorate." □

Bolivia: Chile is hampering efforts to resolve river dispute

By MIKE CORDER

Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands

(AP) — Lawyers for Bolivia said Monday that Chile's decision to file a case at the United Nations' top court about a dispute about a river that crosses their border in the Atacama Desert has hampered diplomatic efforts to resolve the disagreement.

The case between the Latin American neighbors at the International Court of Justice is focused on a small water system but is seen as an opportunity to lay down important jurisprudence at a time when fresh water is becoming an increasingly

important world resource. Chile filed the case in 2016, asking the world court to rule on the nature of the Silala River and use of its waters. At hearings Friday, Chile's Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Ximena Fuentes Torrijo told judges that the dispute offered the court "an opportunity to affirm the applicability of the basic principle of reasonable and equitable utilization in these times of increasing fresh water scarcity."

The two nations say they have narrowed the scope of their disagreement since Chile filed the case. Bolivia has filed counterclaims arguing it has sovereignty

over artificial channels and the waters of the Silala that they carry.

Lawyer Mathias Forteau told judges at the Hague-based court that Chile's "hasty and unilateral" decision to file a case reduced the chances of a diplomatic solution between the two countries.

"Chile seems to have brought the case before the court primarily for preventive purposes" after Bolivia had suggested it might start legal proceedings over the river, Forteau said. "Ultimately what these proceedings show that if there is a need at all it's just need for cooperation, not

for litigation between the two countries."

Bolivia's ambassador to the Netherlands told judges

that his country "finds no reason to justify Chile's claim over the waters of the Silala before this court." □



Exterior view of the Peace Palace, which houses the International Court of Justice, or World Court, in The Hague, Netherlands, Monday, Feb. 18, 2019.

Associated Press

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Over a decade in business, Aruba Living Today: Offering the so much needed human touch

NOORD — We are in 2022. It's been a wild ride with Covid-19 and we all are aiming for a change of routine. We simply want to "live" life again. "It is time for living your dream," as the quote says at Aruba Living Today's office. "We are ten plus years in business, and I am proud to say that all our clients stuck with us. We are no part of a big company, we keep it small, personal, and real. Because you are not a number, no sales target either and certainly your name is not commission. Our responsibility is to make your dream come true," says owner Randolph Arends.

Tempting times

Do you remember the feeling as a kid, when you went to the store with your mom and the baker gave you a sweet roll, the butcher a slice of ham and they all took time to talk to each other? That time when doing groceries on a Saturday meant fun, making friends, and creating connections. To be fully aware in the moment and enjoying the time together sounds like a controversy today. Everything is efficient, there's no-time-to-waste and while doing one task the mind is already thinking ahead to what is next on your to-do list.

Did Covid-19 teach us anything? Weren't we telling each

other during the lockdown that we would pay more attention to each other? Wasn't the message that health and happiness is so much more valuable than hitting targets and implement to-do tasks? The pandemic prevents us from connecting physically. Tight hugs and shaking hands firmly are no longer a natural thing. We live in a world of face masks hides smiles, and hands are sanitized after each touch. This is not who we are. We are in search for connection.

From human to human

If you have decided to buy a house or rent one for vacation in Aruba and you are looking for that match, the question now is how to click with a person that offers a personal touch? One who pays genuine attention and has sincere interest in what you want? This different approach to real estate is what sets Aruba Living Today apart, and the reason Randolph calls himself a property mediator instead of a real estate broker. "The personal touch is essential to me. I am stepping aside of the image that real estate brokers are only in for the commission. This image does not fit me at all, I am in for my passion, and I can only do this from the heart."

One stop shopping point

Services offered by Aruba Living Today are House and Land Sales, Rentals, Investments, Property Management, Vacation Rental, Mortgages, Insurances, Maintenance, Assist in Arrangements for Notary and Utilities, Guiding Bureaucracy Process and Assisting in Import of Furniture.



Randolph and his business partner Berend Prenger are a fantastic, experienced duo, each of them specialists in the field. Berend is also a certified appraiser within the Dutch Kingdom meaning he does your appraisal report that is accepted by all banks and he delivers within three days. "This definitely speeds up the process of buying," Prenger adds.

You are welcome to meet in person

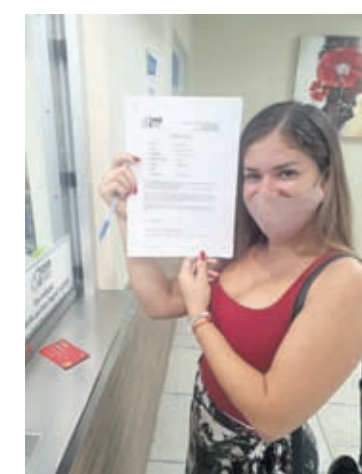
Aruba Living Today houses in an authentic Aruban house, welcoming you in a warm ambiance that emphasizes the philosophy of connecting. Candles, Buddha ornaments and a homey setting form the décor for you to sit and talk about your dream house or investment. "My goal was to do real estate in a different way when I established this company June 1st 2009. Not from the perspective of only selling, but to look for the perfect match between dream house and client. My philosophy is: it will only work when all involved are happy and connected by that personal touch."

Aruba Living Today caters for both local and foreign market divided into 40 % local buyers and 60 % foreign buyers. "Our customers come from Holland, Bel-

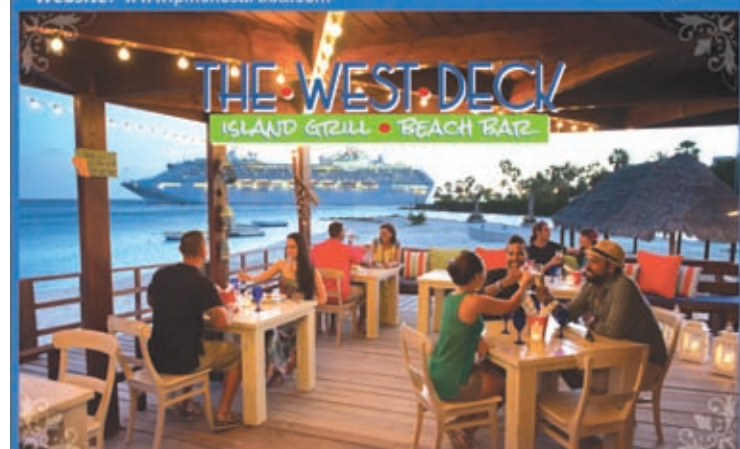
gium, Norway, Germany, UK, Russia, Latin America, United States and Canada. We are widely covered and thus provable good with different cultures, also we speak four languages." Besides that, Aruba Living Today is open to every budget, they have listings for all category buyers. As a member of the Aruban Real Estate Association, they are listed also on the website www.arubalisting.com within a group of 20 of the most advanced realtors on the island. Aruba Living Today is featured on House Hunters, social media, Aruba Living Today and of course in Aruba Today's newspaper.

Aruba Living Today

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Cell +297 593 9177
Mail randolph@livingtoday.aw



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Kiwanis Club of San Nicolas ("KCSN") holds its first Smile Drive

The Smile Drive Project is focused on providing dental care to children ages 6 to 13 who are unable to afford it. A total of 52 children were invited to come to the dentist on this day.

During the dentist appointment, children's teeth were completely cured. Those in need of filling received this, decayed teeth were removed, and a cleaning was performed for all participants. For those who were unable to complete their treatment within the time frame have been scheduled for a follow up appointment during the week. All participants will receive a second round of cleaning in six months. They are now covered for future dental treatments & need



to renew their coverage letter annually under this Smile Drive Project, for continued coverage annually.

To be able to fund this project KCSN sold Smile Drive tumblers during the month of January, February &

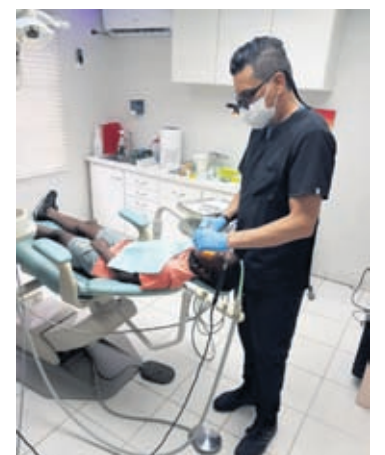
March. We also received donation in kind from Colgate and Martijn Trading Aruba as goodies for the children to be able to continue with their proper dental hygiene daily at home. A heartfelt Thank You to the amazing team of den-

tist and their assistant who made this project possible; Dr. John Hernandez, Dr. Johnny Hernandez, Dr. Marvin v/d Linde & Dr. Michella Rasmijn. Without your support, this project would have not been possible.

Should you wish to contribute with the continuation of this project, you can still purchase a tumbler for AWG 55,- by reaching out to one of KCSN members or KCSN Facebook page.

We look forward to continuing with this wonderful project and invite more dentists who wish to collaborate to contact us.

Let's continue to put smiles on the faces of our children! □



A taste of Hilton Aruba

Palm Beach - On Friday March 18th, Hilton Aruba hosted a multi-tiered event, designed to delight past and future clients, as well as members of the local media.

The event began with an arrival reception in the main lobby, including a welcome drink, and evolved into a sensory collage of experiences, impressing guests with the high quality of service and the level of personal engagement between Team Members.

To fully experience the afternoon, guests were split into three groups, with specific interactions from eforea spa team, the executive chef and the master beverage mixers of the resort.

At the spa terrace, the invitees made their own scrub. On the beach, under executive Chef Olivier's guidance, guests learned to make an easy shrimp coco-mango ceviche with a veggie option. Under Mira Solo Lounge's waterfalls, the master beverage mixers taught guests how to make a true Aruba Ariba, according

to the original recipe, created at the resort in 1963, by bartender Juan "Jocky" Tromp.

Guests then completed the evening at the south pool, transformed into a lounge, illuminated simmering blue, over gourmet hors d'oeuvres and open bar, with live music, for a tropical evening under the stars.

Many local companies partner with the Hilton Aruba Resort & Casino to accommodate and entertain their visiting dignitaries and guests, organizing seminars and dinner parties, graduations and fairs, banquets and accommodation, and demonstrating their loyalty to the Grande Dame of Palm Beach.

The event, tailored to be interactive and engaging with each guest, was orchestrated in their honor, as a token of appreciation for past and future business.

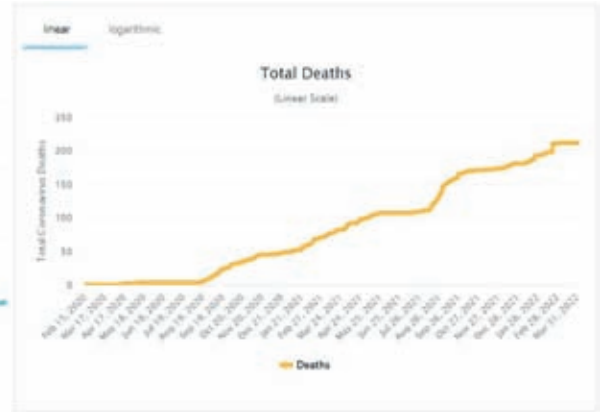
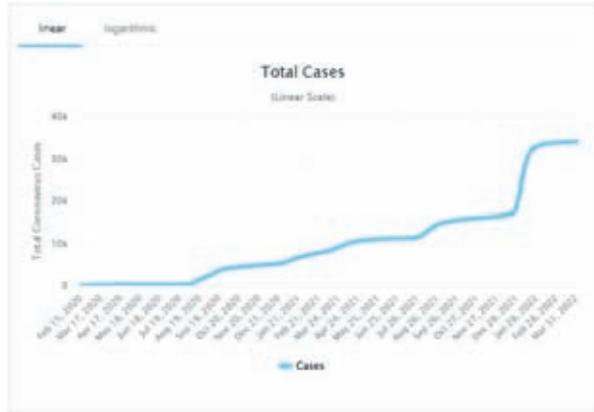
"We always want to showcase what we are capable of doing," said Raynold Semeleer proud of the resorts' events, banquet and culi-



nary team "and we hope that our loyal corporate clients will continue to bring us their special events, year round."

Though these past two years have been affected by uncertainties, challenges and changes in tourism and hospitality, The Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino is as determined as ever to reconnect with members of the local community, and the resort is grateful for their participation in the Taste of Hilton Aruba event. □

Update on the development of COVID-19 in Aruba



Oranjestad - The public health agency of Aruba publishes weekly updates about the development of COVID-19 on Aruba.

In this week's update, the

agency informed that 89 people recovered and a total of 122 new COVID-19 cases were registered. The amount of active cases of COVID-19 for today is 87, with the total amount of

deaths related to or because of COVID-19 is at 212.

Available data illustrates that new COVID-19 cases are at a weekly average

of 17 cases per day and a weekly positivity rate of 33 percent per day.

Currently, there are 3 people hospitalized in Aruba for causes related to or

because of COVID-19, of which 1 person is in ICU and 2 in general admissions. In Colombia, there are 3 people hospitalized as well, of which 2 are in ICU and 1 in general admissions. □

Orange-exhibition GN in Central Hall of Deventer City Hall

A special exhibition inspired by the House of Orange will be on display in the Center Hall of the Deventer City Hall, in the months of April and May.

During opening hours, everyone is welcome at this exceptional exhibition that was canceled two years ago due to the Covid-lockdown. The well-known Deventer artist from Aruba, Gustave Nouel, wants to underline the bridging function of our Royal House and reflect this common identity between the kingdoms in our Kingdom with this exhibition of a series of portrait paintings entitled 'Orange Faces'.

There will be an official culmination on King's Day (April 27). It is the intention that the Orange Association (DOV) together with the City Hall, invite the Cabinet of the Minister



Plenipotentiary of Aruba in The Hague, to say a few words about the bridging

function of our Royal House and the official Aruban approach.

Professional artist GN had more than 200 exhibitions

and countless international art projects...

In 1992 two paintings by GN were shown in the Netherlands Pavilion during the World Expo in Seville (Spain) and in 1993 Nouel was the first Deventer artist to hold a solo exhibition in Sibiu with masterclasses for professional Romanian artists, as part of a cultural exchange with Romania. Under the auspices of the Cultural Council Deventer and the support of the then WVC from The Hague. Royal Talens sponsored all painting materials for the successful masterclass. He has already been included in the Aruban Hall of Fame among the ten most famous Arubans of all times. While still alive.

Gustave Nouel, is a well-known Caribbean artist with an academic and post-academic education, who has gained a lot of experience in various countries, among street artists and street painters from all over the world. As a 'street portraitist', GN drew and painted on the street, in squares and also at art fairs and all kinds of international art activities. This allowed GN to develop an elementary, universal course and share many 'portrait secrets' of street portrait artists with interested parties, both internationally and in his own region, in recent years. □



Suddenly, Twitter's biggest stakeholder is Tesla's Elon Musk

By **MICHELLE CHAPMAN**
and **TOM KRISHER**
AP Business Writers

Tesla CEO Elon Musk acquired a 9% stake in Twitter to become its largest shareholder at a time when he is questioning the social media platform's dedication to free speech and the First Amendment.

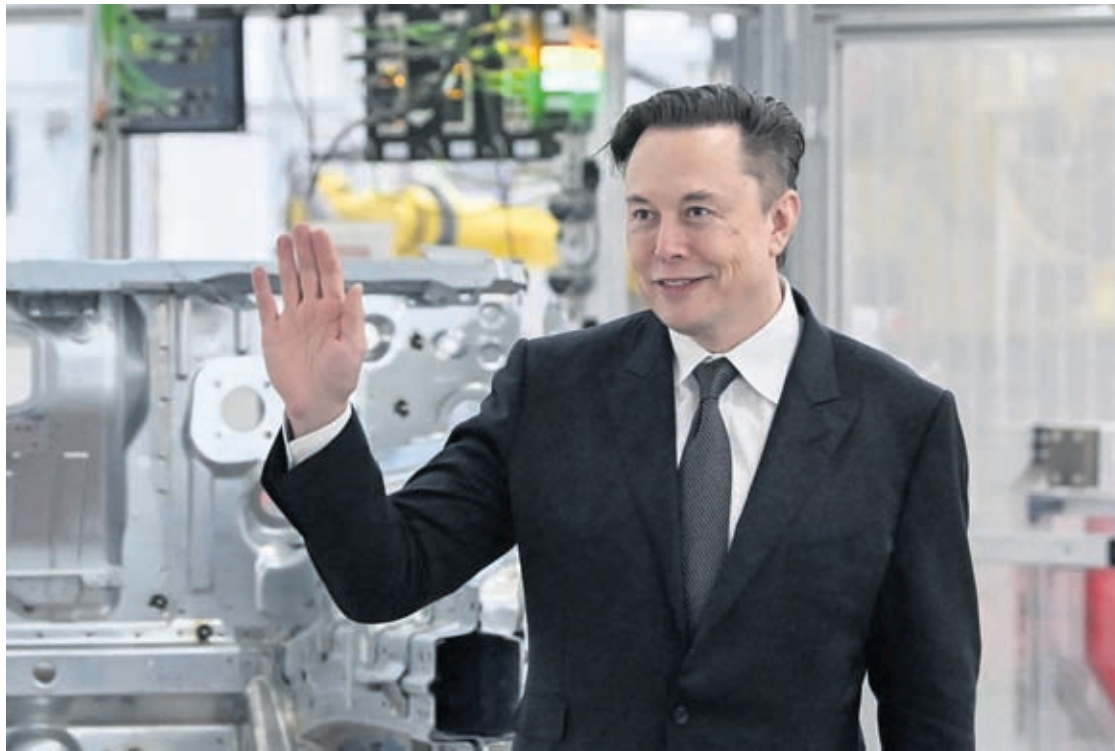
The ultimate aim of Musk's 73.5 million share purchase, worth about \$3 billion, is not known. Yet in late March Musk, who has 80 million Twitter followers and is very active on the site, questioned free speech on Twitter and whether the platform is undermining democracy.

It's unclear just when Musk bought the stake. A U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission filing made public on Monday says the event triggering the filing happened March 14. His stake meets the criteria for being a long-term "passive" investor, one looking to minimize buying and selling of the shares.

Yet Musk has also raised the possibility, publicly before his massive and loyal Twitter following, that he could create a rival social media network.

Industry analysts are skeptical about whether the mercurial CEO will remain on the sidelines for long.

In a note to investors, CFRA Analyst Angelo Zino wrote that although Musk's intent is unclear, Twitter could be viewed as an acquisition



Tesla CEO Elon Musk attends the opening of the Tesla factory Berlin Brandenburg in Gruenheide, Germany, Tuesday, March 22, 2022.

target because the value of its shares have been falling since early last year.

Jack Dorsey stepped down as CEO in November. Musk's stake in Twitter more than four times the size of Dorsey's, who co-founded the company and was the largest individual shareholder until Musk arrived.

"Musk's actual investment is a very small percentage of his wealth, and an all-out buyout should not be ruled out," wrote Zino, who covers Twitter and social media.

Twitter's stock surged more than 28% Monday. Since March 14, the date listed on filing with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Com-

mission, shares of Twitter are up nearly 50% meaning that Musk's investment has paid handsomely, so far. Twitter did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Musk told his millions of followers on Twitter that he was "giving serious thought" to creating his own social media platform, and has clashed repeatedly with financial regulators about his use of Twitter.

Musk is locked into a bitter dispute with the SEC over his ability to post on Twitter. His lawyer has contended in court motions that the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission is infringing on the Tesla CEO's

First Amendment rights.

In October of 2018, Musk and Tesla agreed to pay \$40 million in civil fines and for Musk to have his tweets approved by a corporate lawyer after he tweeted about having the money to take Tesla private at \$420 per share.

The funding was far from secured and the electric vehicle company remains public, but Tesla's stock price jumped. The settlement specified governance changes, including Musk's ouster as board chairman, as well as pre-approval of his tweets. The SEC brought a securities fraud charge, alleging that Musk was manipulating the

stock price with his posts.

Musk's lawyer is now asking a U.S. District Court judge in Manhattan to throw out the settlement, contending that the SEC is harassing him and infringing on his First Amendment rights.

The SEC responded in a court motion, saying it has legal authority to subpoena Tesla and Musk about his tweets, and that Musk's move to throw out the settlement is not valid.

The SEC also disclosed that it is investigating Musk's Nov. 6, 2021 tweets that asked followers whether he should sell 10% of his Tesla stake. The commission confirmed that it issued administrative subpoenas while investigating whether Musk and Tesla are complying with disclosure controls in the 2018 agreement.

Musk ended up selling more than 15 million shares worth roughly \$16.4 billion. With some sales in late December, Musk is close to selling 10%.

Musk's tweets about Twitter and his stock buy came after Donald Trump was banned from Twitter and other top social media platforms following the Jan. 6 Capitol riot last year that critics accused him of inciting. The ban has raised difficult questions about free speech in a social media industry dominated by a few tech giants — an issue that Trump and conservative media have seized upon. □

Stock tied to Trump social firm drops on report of turmoil

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Stock in a company planning to buy Donald Trump's new social media business plunged Monday on a news report that two key staff members left and a regulatory filing that it will miss a key deadline to file its annual financial statements.

Digital World Acquisition Corp. dropped more than 10% in midday trading on a Reuters report that two key executives — one the company's chief technol-

ogy officer — had left the company, citing two anonymous sources.

That report followed a filing by the company last week stating that its accountants needed more time to review financial figures before filing its annual report.

Many public companies request filing extensions, but the news added to investor jitters fueled by the botched February launch of Trump's Truth Social app, which was marred by outages and long wait lists to

gain access. The stock fell to \$56.50, down more than a third over the past month. The Truth Social app topped Apple's App Store free rankings on the day it was made available to a limited set of subscribers in February. Since then, it has tumbled down the charts and is no longer in the top 200.

Digital World is planning to buy Trump's new social media company, Trump Media and Technology Group. Digital World needs regula-



In this July 24, 2021, file photo former President Donald Trump smiles as he pauses while speaking to supporters at a Turning Point Action gathering in Phoenix.

Associated Press

tors to sign off on its deal to merge with Trump Media to access the more than \$1 billion that the former U.S. president had helped

line up to fund the business. Regulators are investigating Digital World following reports it may have broken security rules last year. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Video chat need
 - 7 Ooze
 - 11 Stir up
 - 12 Region
 - 13 Fumble
 - 15 Peony part
 - 16 New driver, often
 - 18 Netlike fabric
 - 21 Supply with cash
 - 22 Celtics' home
 - 24 Finale
 - 25 Hot dog holder
 - 26 Regret
 - 27 Radio parts
 - 29 Play group
 - 30 DNA sample tool
 - 31 Plumbing piece
 - 32 Grass cutter
 - 34 Cell phone annoyance
 - 40 Days gone by
 - 41 Panama explorer
 - 42 Genesis garden
 - 43 Like some winter days
- DOWN**
- 1 Gum mass
 - 2 Mess up
 - 3 Scary shout
 - 4 Like panhandlers' hands
 - 5 Colorado resort
 - 6 Convene
 - 7 Dark-furred martens
 - 8 Pitcher's stat
 - 9 Twisty fish
 - 10 Friend
 - 14 Pythias's friend
 - 16 North African capital
 - 17 Supply with funds
 - 19 Satchel part
 - 20 Abode
 - 21 Nourished
 - 22 Tour carrier
 - 23 Trawling need
 - 25 Jazz variety
 - 28 Make moist
 - 29 Compass creation
 - 31 Piano part
 - 33 Fly catchers
 - 34 Color
 - 35 Scepter
 - 36 Lode material
 - 37 Tad Lincoln's dad
 - 38 Auction buy
 - 39 Put down

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Yesterday's answer

- 17 Supply with funds
- 19 Satchel part
- 20 Abode
- 21 Nourished
- 22 Tour carrier
- 23 Trawling need
- 25 Jazz variety
- 28 Make moist
- 29 Compass creation
- 31 Piano part
- 33 Fly catchers
- 34 Color
- 35 Scepter
- 36 Lode material
- 37 Tad Lincoln's dad
- 38 Auction buy
- 39 Put down

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42						43				

4-5

A X Y D L B A A X R
is L O N G F E L L O W

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

4-5 **CRYPTOQUOTE**

T U X H G U S N M H K O

U G U K R N E U H D J C

K U A U J G J E I H I K U H S

I L U D S. — A N E C L A J L D

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: THE DOG IS A GENTLEMAN; I HOPE TO GO TO HIS HEAVEN, NOT MAN'S. — MARK TWAIN



Smoke and steam rise from a coal processing plant in Hejin in central China's Shanxi Province Nov. 28, 2019.

Associated Press

U.N. warns Earth 'firmly on track toward an unlivable world'

By FRANK JORDANS and SETH BORENSTEIN
Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Temperatures on Earth will shoot past a key danger point unless greenhouse gas emissions fall faster than countries have committed, the world's top body of climate scientists said Monday, warning of the consequences of inaction but also noting hopeful signs of progress. U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change revealed "a litany of broken climate promises" by governments and corporations, accusing them of stoking global warming by clinging to harmful fossil fuels.

"It is a file of shame, cataloguing the empty pledges that put us firmly on track toward an unlivable world," he said.

Governments agreed in the 2015 Paris accord to keep global warming well

below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) this century, ideally no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit). Yet temperatures have already increased by over 1.1C (2F) since pre-industrial times, resulting in measurable increases in disasters such as flash floods, extreme heat, more intense hurricanes and longer-burning wildfires, putting human lives in danger and costing governments hundreds of billions of dollars to confront.

"Projected global emissions from (national pledges) place limiting global warming to 1.5C beyond reach and make it harder after 2030 to limit warming to 2C," the panel said.

In other words, the report's co-chair, James Skea of Imperial College London, told The Associated Press: "If we continue acting as we are now, we're not even going to limit warming to 2 degrees, never mind 1.5 degrees."

Ongoing investments in fossil fuel infrastructure and clearing large swaths of forest for agriculture undermine the massive curbs in emissions needed to meet the Paris goal, the report found.

Emissions in 2019 were about 12% higher than they were in 2010 and 54% higher than in 1990, said Skea.

The rate of growth has slowed from 2.1% per year in the early part of this century to 1.3% per year between 2010 and 2019, the report's authors said.

But they voiced "high confidence" that unless countries step up their efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions, the planet will on average be 2.4C to 3.5C (4.3 to 6.3 F) warmer by the end of the century — a level experts say is sure to cause severe impacts for much of the world's population. □

Casa del Mar 2BR/2B

- Week 2/1113 (17k);
 - Week 5/1315 (19k);
 - Week 8/1113 (18k);
 - Week 8/1409 (18k);
 - Week 9/1218 (16k);
 - Week 10/1207 (16k);
 - Week 13/1509 (13k);
 - Week 14/1308 (13k);
 - Week 15/1217 (10k).
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Studio WK 14 room #6205
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HTTA
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Eagle Beach
Studio WK 12 room #33
30 weeks remain
Price :\$9 K
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Eagle Beach
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Room#3512
29 weeks remain all accelerated
Expire :2036
Price :10 K
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Platinum F-building
14 weeks remain
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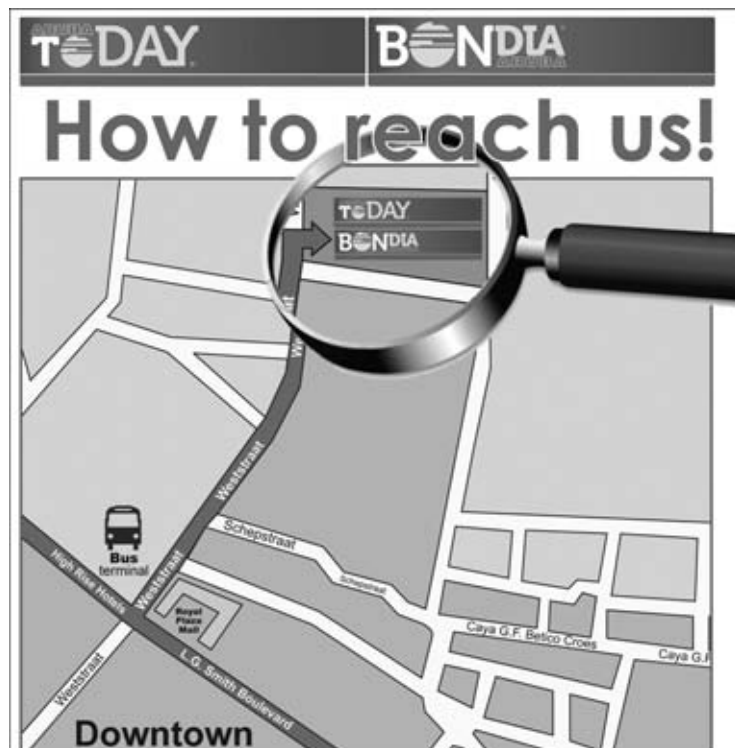
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Meet Jon Batiste, new Grammy winner with plenty going on

By **MARK KENNEDY**

AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Jon Batiste wears so many hats he may need a closet for them all — recording artist, bandleader, musical director, film composer, museum creative director and scion of New Orleans musical royalty.

The multi-instrumentalist won five Grammys on Sunday and despite being on TV all week, not many people may know fully.

HE'S GOT 'SOUL'

Batiste composed music, consulted on and arranged songs for Pixar's animated film "Soul," a mid-life crisis movie mixed with a New York jazz fantasia and a body-swap comedy. He won a Golden Globe for the music alongside Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross of Nine Inch Nails; and the trio also earned the Academy Award for best original score. For their work on "Soul," Batiste, Reznor and Ross won the Grammy on Sunday for best score soundtrack for visual media.

AT THE PIANO NIGHTLY

Batiste has toured globally with his band Stay Human and made a memorable stop at Comedy Central's "The Colbert Report" in 2014. When producers of "The Late Show With Stephen Colbert" were considering having a house band the following year, Batiste and



Jon Batiste, winner of the awards for best American roots performance for "Cry," best American roots song for "Cry," best music video for "Freedom," best score soundtrack for visual media for "Soul," and album of the year for "We Are," poses in the press room at the 64th Annual Grammy Awards at the MGM Grand Garden Arena on Sunday, April 3, 2022, in Las Vegas.

Associated Press

Stay Human were a natural fit. The mutual respect Colbert and Batiste share is obvious. The bandleader often cheers the comedian's nightly monologue from the piano, appears in segments and accompanies the musical guests. Batiste stuck with the gig even during the pandemic, coming up with tunes, both original and covers, on the spot.

MAKING SWEET MUSIC

Recording since he was a teenager, Batiste's albums include "Hollywood Africans," produced by T Bone Burnett, "Anatomy of

Angels: Live at the Village Vanguard," and "Meditations," a collaboration with guitarist Cory Wong. His album "Social Music" spent over a month atop the Billboard and iTunes jazz charts, and he also put together the pandemic benefit album, "Relief: A Benefit for the Jazz Foundation of America's Musicians Relief Fund." His eighth album and the Grammy breakthrough was 2021's "We Are," a sonic blow-out blending R&B, jazz, hip-hop, marching bands and rock, sometimes in the same song. He

earned nods in such various categories as R&B, jazz, American roots, classical, music video and album of the year. Batiste's "American Symphony" is set to premiere at Carnegie Hall in May.

THE BIG EASY

Batiste was born into a long lineage of New Orleans musicians, which includes the Batiste Brothers Band and brass band legends Milton and "Uncle" Lionel Batiste. He played drums as a child before switching to piano at age 11.

He is a graduate of New

Orleans Center for Creative Arts and the prestigious The Juilliard School. The music and culture of New Orleans are highlighted in Batiste's "Freedom" video, which features the band from St. Augustine High School, which Batiste attended, marching through the city's streets. "Jon Batiste has been a tremendous ambassador for Louisiana, as an entertainer and as someone who truly cares about the people of our great state," Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards said Monday.

SIDE HUSTLES

Batiste became the first musical director for The Atlantic magazine in 2017 and is co-creative director of the National Jazz Museum in Harlem. He has been featured in ad campaigns for Chase, Apple, Lincoln and numerous fashion brands including Ralph Lauren, Barney's, Nordstrom and H&M. His song "Freedom" has been showcased across the NCAA Tournament and served as the face of New Orleans ahead of Saturday night's Final Four at the Caesars Superdome.

He also had a role in Spike Lee's 2012 film "Red Hook Summer" and appeared as himself on the HBO television series "Treme." Batiste is literally the poster boy for the upcoming New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival. □



Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg speaks on the stage of a demonstration in Glasgow, Scotland, Friday, Nov. 5, 2021 which is the host city of the COP26 U.N. Climate Summit.

Associated Press

By **JILL LAWLESS**

Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Climate activist Greta Thunberg has

compiled a handbook for tackling the world's interconnected environmental crises, with contributions

Greta Thunberg aims to drive change with 'The Climate Book'

from leading scientists and writers.

It contains contributions from more than 100 academics, thinkers and campaigners, including novelists Margaret Atwood and Amitav Ghosh, climate scientist Saleemul Huq and World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

The book aims to help readers connect the dots between threats to the climate, environment, sustainability and indigenous populations — among others — and is intended as

a guide to understanding and activism.

Contributors including Kenyan environmentalist Wanjira Mathai, Brazilian indigenous activist Sonia Guajajara, French economist Thomas Piketty and Canadian journalist Naomi Klein offer "compelling stories of change, action and resilience," the publisher said, alongside Thunberg's own stories of "learning, demonstrating, and uncovering greenwashing around the world."

"My hope is that this book might be some kind of go-

to source for understanding these different, closely interconnected crises," Thunberg said in a statement.

Thunberg began skipping classes once a week to protest climate change in 2018, when she was 15, sparking a series of school walkouts that grew into a global youth movement. Now 19, the Swedish activist has already published a memoir, "Our House Is On Fire" and a collection of speeches, "No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference." □

Analysis: Iga Swiatek's rapid rise to No. 1 not mind-blowing

By **HOWARD FENDRICH**
AP Tennis Writer

When new No. 1 Iga Swiatek's latest match ended with another victory, her 17th in a row, she jogged over to greet her team in a corner of the Miami Open stadium. She shook her head, put her hands near her temples and made the universal gesture for "mind blown."

Yes, this run has been impressive: Swiatek is 26-3 overall in 2022 and the first woman to win the first three WTA 1000 events of a season. Also impressive: The 2020 French Open champion's rapid ascension to the top of the rankings, officially replacing the recently retired Ash Barty there on Monday.

What none of it has been, to anyone paying attention, is surprising — even if Swiatek says the whirlwind of the past several weeks caught her a bit off guard. "Sometimes, I think it's a bit too much, you know?" the 20-year-old from Poland said in a video interview with The Associated Press. Asked what she meant by that, Swiatek — whose last name is pronounced sh-vee-ON-tek — explained: "I didn't have much time to rest and to reflect on what led to this success or how this happened, basically, because it was all happen-



Iga Swiatek of Poland reacts after beating Naomi Osaka of Japan, 6-4, 6-0, during the women's singles finals of the Miami Open tennis tournament, Saturday, April 2, 2022, in Miami Gardens, Fla.
Associated Press

ing really fast."

That's certainly true.

Consider where she was 18 months ago. Still a teenager, ranked 54th, without a tour-level trophy to her name, she parlayed a top-spin-heavy forehand, a willingness to shift shot speeds, get-to-every-ball court coverage, strong returning and in-match smarts into a Grand Slam championship in Paris in October 2020.

Those skills are apparent to this day, along with such improvements as the kick serve that bothered Naomi Osaka — a four-time major

champion and former No. 1 herself — in the Miami final.

Instead of the sort of step back that often can accompany a Grand Slam breakthrough, particularly one by someone so young, Swiatek kept her feet on the ground and her head in the game, making it to at least the fourth round at each of the subsequent five majors, including a semifinal appearance at the Australian Open in January.

And her ranking kept moving up, to No. 17 by the end of 2020, No. 4 to close 2021

and No. 2 thanks to her victory at Indian Wells, California, last month.

"It's been really cool to watch her grow," Osaka said. "For me, I think the most impressive thing is being able to string together these two (tournament) wins in a row.

While the last step up was hastened along by Barty's departure from the game — and decision to drop out of the rankings rather than remain at No. 1 as long as her points would allow — it was clearly a natural progression for Swiatek.

"Just watching your journey is really incredible," Osaka told Swiatek during the trophy ceremony Saturday, "and I hope you continue having fun."

After a bit of down time in Florida, Swiatek said, she will head home to Warsaw, where she is sure to be feted as the first Polish tennis player — female or male — to get to No. 1.

And then it'll be on to preparing for, and playing on, the clay-court circuit, leading up to Roland Garros, where play begins May 22. First things first, though.

Swiatek is looking forward to a chance to decompress and to comprehend all that has happened lately. For one thing, while she knew the talent and ability were there, she could not know for sure what sort of effect the mental pressure and physical exhaustion of competing so much in such a short amount of time would have.

"Truth be told, I know what kind of tennis I can play. And (in) practices, I was showing a similar level. But I thought that it's going to be possible for me to play like that in matches maybe in a few years," Swiatek said. "So it is a little bit mind-blowing, because I felt like everything clicked this season. And I wasn't expecting to be that consistent." □

Netherlands coach Van Gaal says he has prostate cancer

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Netherlands national soccer team coach Louis van Gaal has revealed that he is being treated for an aggressive form of prostate cancer but still plans to lead the team at the World Cup in Qatar in November. Van Gaal told Sunday night Dutch talk show "Humber-to" that players in the team did not know about his diagnosis even though he was receiving night-time treatment during four training camps.

"You don't tell something like this to people you work with because it could influence their choices, their

energy or whatever, and I thought, 'they shouldn't know,'" he said.

"I have been to the hospital in the evening or night in every period, without the players knowing," the 70-year-old coach said. Van Gaal lost his first wife to cancer.

"It's part of life. I have experienced so much with disease and death, in my own family, my wife," he said. "I have probably been enriched as a person by all those experiences I have had with it."

Van Gaal is in his third stint as Netherlands coach. He led the team to the semi-

finals of the 2014 World Cup in Brazil. He also has coached clubs including Barcelona, Manchester United, Bayern Munich and Ajax, leading the Amsterdam club to the Champions League title in 1995.

He did not attend last week's World Cup draw in Qatar after testing positive for COVID-19. The Netherlands was drawn to play host Qatar, Senegal and Ecuador. Ahead of the draw, Van Gaal said it was ridiculous the tournament was being played in Qatar. Manchester United posted support for Van Gaal on Twitter. "Everybody at Man-



Louis van Gaal, coach of the Dutch national soccer team walks towards the mixed zone after a team training in Hoenderloo, eastern Netherlands, Thursday, May 15, 2014.
Associated Press

chester United is fully behind our former manager, Louis van Gaal, in his battle against cancer. Sending you strength and courage, Louis," the club wrote.

UEFA also sent best wishes via Twitter, and the official Dutch supporters site "Ons Oranje" tweeted an orange heart above a photo of Van Gaal. □

Hit Hard: Hitting coaches have short shelf life in majors

By JAY COHEN

AP Baseball Writer

PHOENIX (AP) — Connor Dawson is a psychologist, gatekeeper, analyst and strategist. And a hitting coach, too.

Tough job.

“There’s just so much out there for one guy to handle now that wasn’t the case 20 years ago,” Dawson said.

The 28-year-old Dawson is one of two new hitting coaches for the Milwaukee Brewers, hired along with Ozzie Timmons after Andy Haines was let go in October. Haines ended up in Pittsburgh, part of a remarkable shakeup for one of the highest profile positions on a major league coaching staff.

A whopping 17 teams made a change at hitting coach in the offseason. The Brewers, Baltimore Orioles and Seattle Mariners opted to give the title to two people after previously going with one, joining the Houston Astros and Los Angeles Dodgers.

That’s compared to four managerial changes — Mark Kotsay in Oakland, Buck Showalter with the New York Mets, Oliver Marmol for St. Louis and Bob Melvin in San Diego — and four changes with the



Boston Red Sox hitting coach Peter Fatse (62) watches the warmup in the fourth inning from the dugout during a spring training baseball game against the Atlanta Braves at CoolToday Park, Sunday, April 3, 2022, in North Port, Fla.

pitching coach title.

“By a significant amount the hitting coach is the toughest staff job, including the manager. For sure,” said Tony La Russa, the 77-year-old Hall of Fame manager of the Chicago White Sox.

“Those other guys have to work, but hitters hit every day and there’s a lot of them. And trying to get them right, keep them right. I don’t know if it’s just

they get worn out, I don’t know. ... You see a hitting coach that’s got longevity, man, you cannot give them enough credit.”

The widespread changes at hitting coach occurred after the major league batting average dipped to .244 last season, its lowest since the year of the pitcher in 1968. There were a record 2,664 more strikeouts than hits, the gap increasing from 1,147 during the

pandemic-shortened 2020 season and 784 in 2019, when strikeouts topped hits for the first time.

“We’re in a stage with it that other areas of the game have provided some concrete ways to move forward and we’re still really searching for ways that we think can sustain in helping hitters,” Brewers manager Craig Counsell said. “We’re trying a lot of different things and I think that’s why

you’re seeing the coaches cycle. And it’s because it’s a really difficult job.”

Today’s hitting coaches do a lot more than just coach hitting, a daunting task in and of itself since it involves knowing the swings of every position player on the roster — a group that most likely varies dramatically in size, strength and experience.

They also help their players find the right mindset for a task that usually results in failure. They sift through an ever-expanding amount of information to help determine what is useful for each hitter and what can be discarded. They shape how their team plans to attack an opponent’s pitching staff.

“At the big league level, a lot of guys know what their swing does. They know how to formulate a game plan,” Diamondbacks catcher Carson Kelly said. “So I think a lot of it is reassurance and giving information. Just basically having as much information as we can to help us try to move forward when we’re struggling and find ways to make adjustments over a long season.” Dawson said he felt his job was about 30% coaching versus 70% working on psychology and mindset. □

Associated Press



Gamers compete during the Athens Online mega-lan gaming expo, hosted by eSports at the University of Georgia, in Athens, Ga, March 3, 2018.

Associated Press

By WAYNE PARRY

Associated Press

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. (AP)

— New Jersey’s first company to take bets on competitive video games said it planned to begin full op-

erations Monday, having completed a trial period for state regulators.

Esports Entertainment Group was approved Friday to end a testing period of “soft play” while New

London firm taking bets on esports launches in New Jersey

Jersey regulators evaluated its product. The New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement confirmed it had authorized the company to commence full operations. The company is affiliated with the license of Bally’s casino.

“We are pleased to have passed through the soft play period, which is a testament to all the hard work put in by our team over the past year,” said Grant Johnson, the company’s CEO. “As the first licensed esports-focused betting site in North America, we’re thrilled to fully launch the VIE.gg platform

in New Jersey, one of the gold standard jurisdictions for sports wagering in the country.”

The company is based in London and has offices in Hoboken, New Jersey, and in Malta. For now, it can only take bets on esports. It will take bets on people playing games including Call of Duty, Overwatch, CS:GO, League of Legends and DOTA 2.

Johnson estimated betting on esports is expected to reach \$205 billion by 2027. The market research company Newzoo projects esports will generate \$1.6 billion in revenue globally by 2024, up from just over \$1

billion last year.

Esports is generating money for the hosts of events including tournaments and championships, but also in hotel room stays and food and beverage spending. Las Vegas has embraced it, building a 30,000 square-foot arena for esports in 2018.

New Jersey has been slower to embrace the activity, although individual casinos have held scattered tournaments.

Last year, New Jersey invested \$200,000 to set up a center at Stockton University to help Atlantic City and the state become a national hub for esports. □